

# The Counting Cord

**Workshop provides  
taste of birch water**

**Gathering  
celebrates Easter**

**Henu Court:  
restoring connections**

**Drumming returns  
to Chuq'eya Qenq'a**

**Spring 2022**

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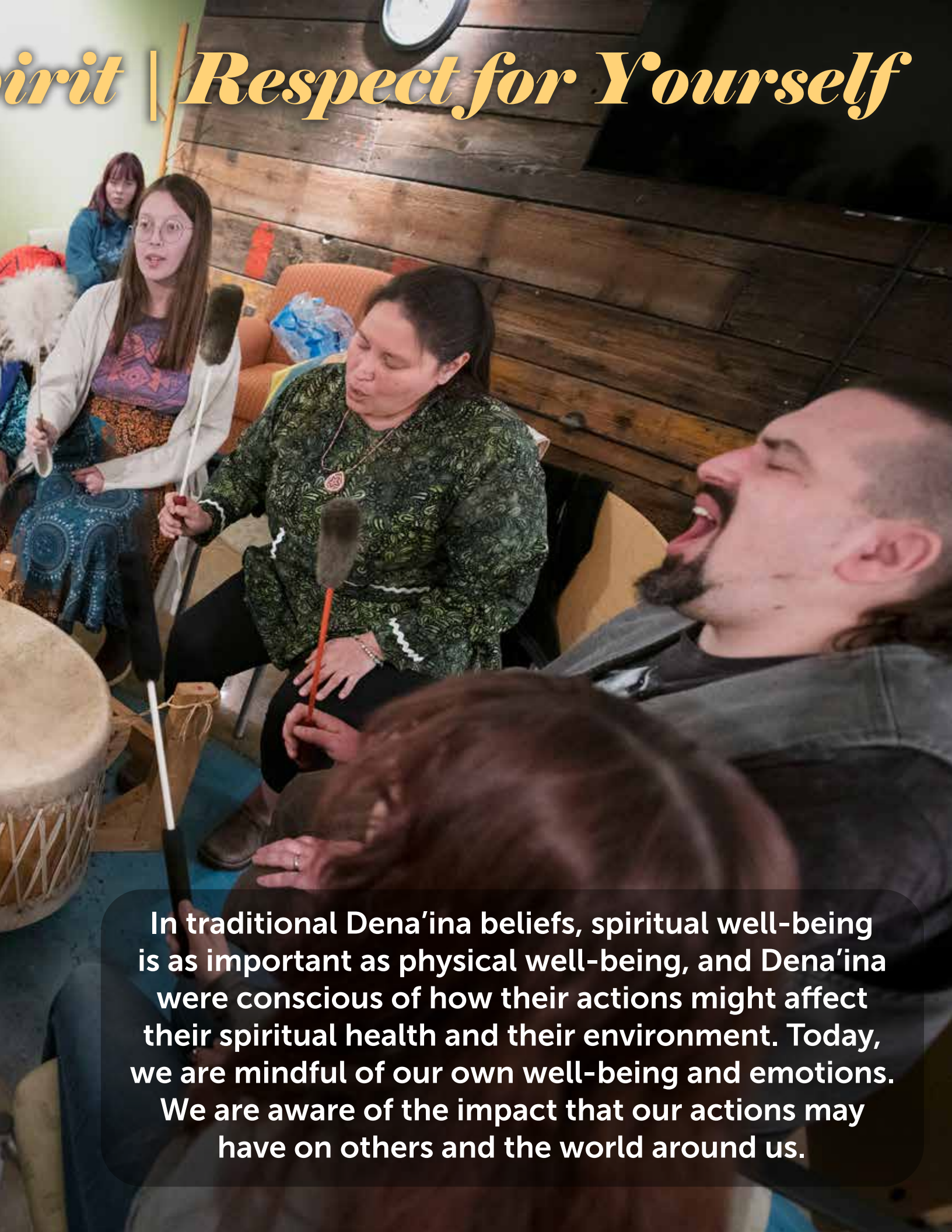
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# *Yinihugheltani | One's Spirit*



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**In traditional Dena'ina beliefs, spiritual well-being is as important as physical well-being, and Dena'ina were conscious of how their actions might affect their spiritual health and their environment. Today, we are mindful of our own well-being and emotions. We are aware of the impact that our actions may have on others and the world around us.**



# Yaghali du?

The Tribal Council is pleased to introduce Peter Evon as the new Executive Director of Tribal Administration.

Peter comes to the Tribe with many years of management experience with Alaska Native organizations. Most recently, he has served as the Chief Operating Officer for the Association of Village Council Presidents Regional Housing Authority in Bethel. Peter has also been active in his community as a youth sports coach, non-profit board member, and Parks and Recreation Committee and School Board member.



*Peter Evon*

Peter grew up in Akiachak, and is a Tribal Member of the Akiachak Native Community. He is fluent in the Central Yupik language. He takes pride in his Alaska Native heritage. In fact, he says he still has the knuckles from his days competing in the seal hop at the Native Youth Olympics!

Peter started his work with tribal organizations with the Akiachak Native Community, where he was the Environmental Director. His first experience as an Executive Director came with the Orutsararmiut Native Council in Bethel, which serves 3,800 Tribal Members.

Peter says that serving a tribe is different than working for a business. He appreciates the personal nature of the job, and the importance of the work.

Away from the office, Peter enjoys sports and the outdoors. He grew up fishing during the summer and moose hunting every fall. He and his wife Katherine are raising five children. His family is excited to explore all that Yaghanen, the Good Land, has to offer.

We are very grateful to Chelsea Hendriks, a Tribal Member, for all the hard work she has put in as the Interim Executive Director of Tribal Administration since taking on the role July 1, 2021. Under her leadership, the Tribe has been able to navigate challenges and work toward our vision, "To assure Kahtnuht'ana Denai'ina thrive forever."



*Chelsea Hendriks*

Chelsea will resume her role as Tribal Programs Director, but will provide invaluable insight and support for Peter during this transition.

Please join us in welcoming Peter to the Kenaitze Indian Tribe.

Duk'idli, respectfully,  
Bernadine Atchison  
Tribal Council Chair



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Tribal Council Members and members of the administration leadership team tour the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus in April. Education programs are expected to begin in the new building on Sept. 6.





# Tribe's services, facilities continue to grow

In March, the Tribal Council held a virtual Quarterly Meeting to update Tribal Members on some of the projects and programs under way.

## Tyotkas Elder Center

In March, Tyotkas Elder Center reopened for in-person dining and activities. Lunch is served on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Activities are scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays. For those who can't make it to Tyotkas, meal home delivery will continue on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A number of field trips are being planned for the summer.

From Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2021, Elders staff served 11,220 meals.

For questions about the Tribe's Elder services, call 907-335-7280.

## TDHE Housing

The Housing program offers assistance to un'ina with urgent home repairs; utility, mortgage, rent, and delinquent property tax payments; and emergency housing assistance – essentially, anything needed to keep a family or individual living in a safe home. Housing also provides sanding and snow plowing for Elders and un'ina with disabilities, and assistance with housing costs for full-time students.

For information about Housing program services, call 907-335-7228.

## Educational fishery

Preparations are underway to start construction on a new Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Community Hall and Harvest Pavilion. Other

upgrades have been made to facilities at the Waterfront, and staff are preparing for the opening of the fishery on June 1. Information on how to schedule the net has been mailed to Tribal Members.

## Education

Tribal Members were updated on the Kahtnuht'ana Duhdeldiht Campus, with programs beginning on Sept. 6 in the new building.

Tribal Members also had a tutorial on how to access the Dena'ina Language Institute resources, including the audio dictionary, on the Tribe's website at [www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/](http://www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/).

## Sterling Highway Project

The Tribe continues to work with the Federal Highway Administration and numerous other agencies on reconstruction and realignment of the Sterling Highway between mileposts 45 and 60. Because the project impacts historic Dena'ina areas, the Tribe is part of an agreement to have personnel on-site to investigate cultural resources that may be uncovered.

In 2021, discoveries included a cache pit, a hearth, and an irregular depression under a water bladder. In 2022, The Tribe will continue with construction mon-

itoring, cultural surveys and data recovery.

## Title IV-E

This federal program provides funds for foster care, transitional independent living programs for children, guardianship assistance, and adoption assistance for children with special needs. The Tribe has drafted a Title IV-E plan, which is being reviewed by relevant agencies.

## Nit Qenach'delghesh

The Dena'ina words for "communication together," this is an intertribal consortium of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe and the Ninilchik Village Tribe. The purpose is to provide broadband access to the Tribes, Tribal Members, and underserved households across our service areas. The Tribes have applied for federal funding for the project. Feasibility studies and Professional Engineer Certification for the network design are complete.

## Transportation

The Tribe has received a federal grant to develop a fixed-route bus service on the central Kenai Peninsula. The route will go from Nikiski to Sterling, and will be open to the community. The Tribe is working with city and borough governments to identify bus stop locations. Service is expected to start next fall.

# Good impressions

As a member of the Board of Directors of the National Indian Education Association, Ben Baldwin says he hopes his recent trip to Washington, D.C., was impactful in a number of ways.

The trip was part of NIEA's "Hill Week" event. Each year, representatives from the organization meet members of Congress and administration officials to advocate for Indian education, and Alaska Native and American Indian sovereignty as it pertains to education.

Baldwin was waiting for one of those meetings with Sen. Lisa Murkowski, when he walked Ketanji Brown Jackson. At the time, Jackson was the nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court and was meeting with senators ahead of her confirmation hearings.

While it was just a quick hello, Baldwin said his first impression of Jackson was that she was friendly, a good person with a quick smile, and excited to meet new people. And he said he likes to think that the delegation's reaction may have made an impact on Murkowski. Murkowski voted to confirm Jackson to the Supreme Court.

"I like to think that Sen. Murkowski saw how excited our Native delegation was to meet the judge," Baldwin said.

The NIEA delegation had more in-depth meetings with many other lawmakers and administrators during their trip. One of the biggest issues they discussed was infrastructure spending on BIA schools, and schools that serve Alaska Native and American Indian



*Ben Baldwin poses with Ketanji Brown Jackson prior to Jackson's confirmation as a Supreme Court Justice.*

communities.

They also discussed full funding for impact aid, which is federal funding distributed in areas where land is not taxable by states, such as federally-owned lands and tribal lands. Impact aid can be used for education, among other things.

In fact, there are many funding streams that impact education, Baldwin said, and part of the message was to reiterate that the federal government has obligations to tribes.

One of the most impactful meetings for Baldwin was with Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. The NIEA delegation was

emphasizing the importance of language and culture, and being dual lingual so that people can talk and think in their Native language, as well as English.

Cardona responded in Spanish that he understood, and that he still talks to his mother in Spanish.

Baldwin said the response drew the biggest round of applause of the day.

"Having the Secretary of Education understand what we've been saying for so long, that he personally understood, that was so cool to see," Baldwin said. "When he (answered in Spanish), it wasn't just someone saying it. We felt he understood."



# Settlement reached in opioid lawsuit

Alaska Native and American Indian tribes have reached a settlement with a drug manufacturer and the country's three largest distributors over the toll that opioids have taken on communities across the nation.

The Kenaitze Indian Tribe is one of more than 400 tribes and tribal organizations to have sued over opioids. The Tribe joined more than 60 tribal communities nationwide in filing a suit in November 2018.

The \$590 million settlement involves drugmaker Johnson & Johnson, and distributors AmerisourceBergen, McKesson, and Cardinal. Johnson &

Johnson would pay \$150 million over two years, while the distributors would pay \$440 million over 6 1/2 years.

All 574 federally recognized tribes will be eligible to participate in the settlement. The agreement will go into effect when 95 percent of the tribes that have filed lawsuits against the companies agree to it.

The court filing was made public on Feb. 1. The filing lays out the agreement in broad terms, with some details still being worked out.

In Alaska, funds would be distributed using the same formula by which tribal com-

pact funds are shared. The Kenaitze Indian Tribe is ranked sixth among tribes and tribal health organizations in Alaska, and 117th across all tribes with regard to percentage of the distribution.

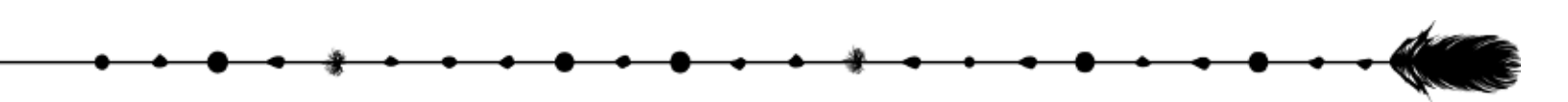
Diana L. Zirul, Tribal Council Treasurer and Chair of the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board, said that when the Tribe joined the lawsuit in 2018, the Kenai Peninsula had the highest rate of opioid addiction in Alaska.

In its Statement of Interest filed with the lawsuit, the Tribe wrote that the opioid crisis was straining its ability to provide adequate services. Funds were diverted from Tribal priorities to provide new positions needed to address the crisis, such as substance abuse counselors and nurses and physicians specializing in addiction.

The Statement of Interest describes some of the impacts of the opioid crisis on the community:

"The Tribe has lost sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters to addiction, homelessness, incarceration and death. This crisis has caused financial stress on families and our community, and our children are encountering drugs at a much earlier age. Our children are being raised by single parents, fragmented families, grandparents and great-grandparents or being taken into Tribal and State custody. The crisis is straining nearly every governmental and cultural service we provide to the breaking point."

Alaska Native and American Indian people are three times more likely to die of a drug over-



dose than the general population, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2017, American Indian and Alaska Native people had the second-highest rate of opioid overdose out of all U.S. racial and ethnic groups, and the second and third highest overdose death rates from heroin and synthetic opioids, respectively.

The Tribal Council will be discussing how to move forward. While the amount of funding that would come to the Tribe has yet to be determined, it will be required to be used to address the opioid crisis. The Tribal Council will evaluate how best to strategically use settlement funds to sustain the services and facilities necessary for treatment.

The Tribal Council, the Kahtnuht'ana Dena'ina Health Board, and the Behavioral Health Committee also have concerns about the stigma associated with dependence and addiction, and will work to encourage those facing substance use issues to seek help.

The settlement with the tribes is separate from settlements being worked out with state and local governments. Settlements between tribes and other companies involved in the opioid industry also are being negotiated.

However, Zirul, who also serves on the Governor's Advisory Council on Opioid Remediation, stressed the need for the state to work collaboratively with tribes, especially in rural areas where tribal clinics are the only places that provide substance use services.

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breaking point.'**



*Jeff Swan, Kenaitze's Greenhouse Coordinator, leads a workshop on gardening in early April.*

An April snow shower was falling outside, but inside the Tribe's Ch'k'denetyah yuyeh greenhouses, things are starting to flower.

There are now two greenhouses at Shanteh t'uh, the Tribe's property on Ames Road in Kenai. One was relocated from Kahtnuht'ana Qayah, the Old Town Kenai campus. The other was erected last fall.

Water, electric and natural gas connections were installed over the winter, and Greenhouse Coordinator Jeff Swan planted the first seeds on Feb. 15. Those plants are now thriving. In fact, the pumpkin and zucchini vines have reached the lower edge of the greenhouse roof.

Ch'k'denetyah yuyeh, the name for the greenhouses, is a Dena'ina phrase that means "we

grow things inside." Shanteh t'uh is Dena'ina for "which is summertime place." The Tribe maintained greenhouses and a garden at Shanteh t'uh in the 1980s and 90s.

The new greenhouses are each 30 feet by 72 feet. Combined with the outside garden area, there is plenty of room to grow. The greenhouses are built on a gravel pad, so water can be absorbed rather than puddling.

Swan said he will be drawing on experience and resources from those previous agriculture projects. Wild soil from the garden will be reconstituted and used in the raised planting boxes in the greenhouses. Maintenance staff have been helping to construct 20 new boxes for to fill the second greenhouse.

And, as some of the cold weather crops, such as broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage, are ready to move outside, Swan will be planting them in the garden area.

Other plants currently growing in the greenhouse include mustard greens, cherry tomatoes, cantaloupe, squash, cucumbers, Swiss chard, bok choy, and lettuce. When it's ready to harvest, the produce will be sent over to Tyotkas Elder Center for use in meals. Swan is also experimenting with a hydroponic set-up.

Swan said that all of the plants grown in the greenhouses will be started from seed to avoid inadvertently introducing pests that can hitch a ride on plants shipped in from elsewhere.

Swan was able to host the first gardening workshop at the



*A young pumpkin receives support from a medical mask in early April. Pumpkins and squash were in bloom early this spring.*

Shanteh t'uh location in early April. The topic, soil preparation, was timely for participants getting ready to start their own gardening projects.

The bottom layer of the planters is filled with gravel. On top of that, Swan suggests layering grass clippings, sticks, and leaves, then some wild soil, manure and compost. The top few inches are filled with a layer of garden mix, which will get your crop through the first growing season while all the layers below are composting.

After the first year's harvest, the old plants can be chopped up and turned under the soil, adding to the composting layers and providing more nutrients for the soil.

Details for future workshops are still being worked out. In the meantime, Swan is available to share gardening tips at 907-690-0714 or [jswan@kenaitze.org](mailto:jswan@kenaitze.org).



# Birch Water



**'Traditionally, for our people, in late spring, when everything is melting, the water is dirty and not good for drinking. People would tap birch trees for two to three weeks. I remember hearing that from my grandmother.'**

*Karen Trulove*



*Karen Trulove, the Traditional Healer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, shares cups of birch water with Elders and youth who attended a workshop in April. At left, water drips from a tree Trulove tapped for the class.*

Birch trees have always been important to the Dena'ina people. One traditional use is tapping the tree in the spring for the sap and its health and healing properties.

Karen Trulove, the Traditional Healer at the Dena'ina Wellness Center, remembers learning about birch water from her grandmother and great-grandmother.

"Traditionally, for our people, in late spring, when everything is melting, the water is dirty and not good for drinking. People would tap birch trees for two to three weeks," Trulove said. "I

remember hearing that from my grandmother."

Birch water is also one of the first plant-based foods to become available each year. A birch tree's sap starts flowing when days get warm but nights stay cold, usually mid- to late April.

Trulove recently planned a birch water tapping workshop for Elders. She demonstrated the technique for tapping birch trees and collecting the sap, and shared information about the benefits of birch water.

Birch trees absorb so much water from the earth, Trulove



said. Through that process, the clear, slightly sweet liquid picks up many nutrients and may provide health benefits. Nutrients in birch water may help strengthen bones, boost skin health, and strengthen hair. Birch water may also have antioxidant properties.

While birch water is a low-calorie way to hydrate, Trulove did note that it can contain xylitol, which is harmful to dogs.

Fresh birch water can be a refreshing drink. It can also be frozen for later use.

Trulove said she also likes to boil down birch water to make birch syrup, which she uses when smoking fish to make birch candied salmon.

When selecting trees to tap, Trulove says she likes to try to get away from roads or other facilities, where unhealthy substances might be absorbed by the tree's roots. Before tapping a tree, she offers a blessing. She also makes sure to leave the area around a tree better than she found it, cleaning up trash and debris.

Once a tree is selected, she drills a hole  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter at a slight upward angle on the sunny side of the tree, inserts a sap tap, and hangs a bucket to collect the sap. Covering the bucket with a piece of cheesecloth will keep insects out of the sap.

During the peak season, a tree can produce anywhere from less than a gallon per day, to as much as 10 gallons per day. Buckets should be checked two or three times per day. Taps should also be checked periodically as they can clog up with coagulated sap.



*At left, Margie Revet enjoys a cup of fresh birch water during a workshop held at the Dena'ina Wellness Center. "I've never had it before," Revet said. "It's nice and sweet." At top, Bessie Phillip, a Wellness Assistant at the Center, talks about the importance of giving the tree an offering of thanks. She tied a strand of hair to the tree's bark. Above, buckets collect fresh birch water.*

When tapping season is done, she whittles down a birch twig to plug the hole.

The birch tree has many other traditional uses. Leaves can be made into a tea. The inner layer of bark can be ground up and used as flour. Birch bark can be used to make bowls, baskets and containers, as well as boats and shelters. Birch wood was used for snow-

shoe frames, structures, and for a variety of tools and utensils. Birch wood burns slow and hot, making it good for cooking and smoking.

In her role as Traditional Healer, Trulove works with traditional plants, as well as with people's energy through healing touch techniques. To learn more or to make an appointment, call the Dena'ina Wellness Center at 907-335-7500.

# Easter Party



**'This is something I'll never forget. I've never had an Easter thing to go to. All the people here, I'm happy we can have it in this room (at Tyotkas). A lot of Elders can come out and see their grandkids.'**

*Eddie Englestad*

Kenaitze and Salamatof Tribal Members gathered recently to celebrate Easter with the first tribe-wide, in-person event in more than two years.

"It's nice to see a lot of people in here," said Eddie Englestad during the party at Tyotkas Elder Center. "I like seeing all the little kids in here – it's good memories for them."

Englestad said he was able to help with preparations for the event, and appreciated the celebration.

"This is something I'll never forget. I've never had an Easter thing

to go to," Englestad said. "All the people here, I'm happy we can have it in this room (at Tyotkas). A lot of Elders can come out and see their grandkids."

Englestad said he saw people he hadn't seen in a couple of years, including a cousin that took him a moment to recognize.

Jaunita O'Brien said it was wonderful to gather with other families. She said her family has gotten together off and on, but the Easter party was their first big gathering in a couple of years. She also had spotted some peo-



*Opposite page, Scarlet Charbonneau, Lovè Carter-Hendriks, Gracelyn Moore and Savannah Sparks serve up fresh lemonade. Above left, Maebh Kniceley concentrates on decorating an egg as Ashley Kniceley watches. Above right, Stryker Schoof and Gavin Schoof dye Easter eggs. Left, Veronica Weeks has her face painted by Jessica Crump. Below, The Tribe's Maintenance staff grill corn on the cob.*

ple who she had not seen in a long time.

"I haven't mingled yet – but I will," O'Brien said. "Everybody here is a close-knit family. It's wonderful, and the kids are so excited."

The event included drawings for prizes such as movie tickets, passes to the Seward SeaLife Center, and children's bicycles. Elders who helped with the event were entered into a drawing for gift baskets provided by several of the Tribe's departments.



# Greeting th



# e day



This winter, the return of Dawn Prayers to the Ggugguyni T'uh, or Raven Plaza, outside of the Dena'ina Wellness Center provided a bright spark when it was cold and dark.

And Wellness and Behavioral Health staff have kept the fire burning, starting the campfire every Friday morning for



*Above, Bessie Phillip prepares to receive sage smoke during a smudging offered by Jamie Farrell. At right, Farrell lights the sage.*

anyone who wants to come and take part.

"That's so sacred," said Therese Titus, who learned about Dawn Prayers in April, and attended with her husband, Tom, as soon as she found out about them. "That's really powerful, even in the dead of winter, anybody who is in a bind knows they can come here and warm up, and share their troubles."

Titus said she and her husband are Athabascan from the Interior, and the opportunity to gather around the fire also made them feel like a part of things.

George Holly led Dawn Prayers in the past, and contacted Wellness Director Tawna Duncan

about resuming the gatherings. Holly has said that Dawn Prayers belong to everyone, as a way to greet the day, to share and to heal.

"It doesn't matter who you are, what church you go to, or if you have no affiliation, it belongs to all of us," Holly said.

Duncan said that Holly wanted Dawn Prayers to continue when his schedule took him out of town.

"His intention was to continue to have something meaningful and spiritual on an ongoing basis," Duncan said.

Dawn Prayers are informal, inter-faith, and open to all. Some weeks, there is drumming and

singing. Other weeks, there is just conversation, or thoughts and blessings offered by those attending. Some people stop by for just a few minutes on their way in to work, others linger by the fire.

Those who have attended since they started in January have been able to observe the change of seasons, from starting and finishing in the dark, to watching the sun come up before Dawn Prayers start.

The fire ring is at the center of Ggugguyni T'uh, with the Tribe's traditional values ringing the fire. The values can also provide inspiration for the day.

Dawn Prayers are Fridays from 8 to 8:30 a.m., and are open to all.





# Restoring connections

**'You see in their eyes that it's clicked. They can see that we care – that makes a huge difference. They are making a change in their life, not just jumping through hoops (to avoid jail time). That's what I like. That's what keep me going.'**

*Evelyn Dolchok,*

*Kenaitze Tribal Court*

*Chief Judge*

Evelyn Dolchok, Kenaitze Tribal Court Chief Judge, says there's a point in each Henu Community Wellness Court participant's journey where there's a noticeable change.

"You see in their eyes that it's clicked," Dolchok said. "They can see that we care – that makes a huge difference. They are making a change in their life, not just jumping through hoops (to avoid jail time). That's what I like. That's what keep me going."

The Henu Community Wellness Court is now in its fifth year of operation. Henu is a joint-jurisdiction therapeutic court operated by the Tribe and the Alaska Court System. The court serves adults who face legal trouble stemming from substance use.

Henu takes a restorative approach, providing participants with the resources to get to the root of their issues and restore their ties to their community.

To join the Henu Court, candidates start by filling out an application. People might learn about the court from their attorney, a judge, or one of the program coordinators.

The application first goes to the District Attorney, who will determine if the applicant is eligible. Court participants are typically facing a felony charge, or have an accumulation of lesser charges. People who have committed violence or dealt drugs are not eligible for the court. The Henu Court is open to Native and non-Native members of the community.

If the district attorney signs off, the applicant then goes to the Tribe's probation officer for a risk assessment, and to the Behavioral Health department for a substance use assessment to determine their treatment needs.

The application then goes back to the Henu core team, which consists of a Tribal Court Judge, State Superior Court Judge, the District Attorney, and other State and Tribal Court staff, for final approval.

Henu participants must also sign a Rule 11 agreement, which is agreed to by their attorney and the District Attorney. The agreement lays out the sentencing guidelines if they graduate from the Henu Court, and the consequences if they don't.

Three new participants recently were approved for participation in the Henu Court, bringing the number of current participants to six. The Court has had 15 graduates since it started.

The Henu Court process takes individuals between 18 and 24 months to complete. There are four phases: the Trust Phase; the Belonging Phase; the Living Well Phase; and the Restorative Phase. Participants must apply to graduate to the next phase.

As they move to the next phase, participants receive items with traditional meaning. Dolchok said traditional values are an important part of the Henu Court process.

"They're woven in," Dolchok said.



*Henu participants receive recognition upon completing each of four stages, in order from top left: a medicine bag with an agate, a dentalium shell, a spruce hen feather with a blue bead, and a piece of chaga with red beads.*

At the end of the first phase, participants receive a medicine bag, which is a small pouch worn around the neck. An agate is placed in the bag, representing a blessing and luck.

After the second phase, participants receive a dentalium shell, which the Dena'ina used as currency. The dentalium represents their value as a person.

When they complete the third phase, participants receive a spruce hen feather and a blue bead. The spruce hen feather

feeds the blessing. The blue bead is the color of water and the river. It shows that life can flow like a river, sometimes rough and sometimes smooth, and that we all need to learn to flow with it.

Their last gift as graduates of the program is a piece of chaga, which is found on birch trees. Dena'ina would hollow out a piece of chaga to carry embers from place to place. A red bead is placed inside the chaga to represent that flame, and to carry the flame of their sobriety with them.

The Henu Court has resumed meeting in-person after meeting virtually for much of the pandemic. Dolchok said that personal connection makes a difference. Henu Court staff share in the joy when a Henu participant is successful, and disappointment if they are unable to maintain their sobriety.

"You don't realize the importance until you can't be in-person. That's where the connections happen," Dolchok said. "You become so connected, and so proud of them."



# 'It's good for the so

## Drumming returns to Chuq'eya Qe

*Robert Bearheart, Jonathon Rine, Faye Koby and her mom Kaylee Koby drum together during a recent gathering.*

**'It's really nice to have drumming back. Especially since the sun started coming out. Drumming outside feels like a whole different connection.'**

*Jamie Farrell, Chemical Dependency Counselor*



The Heartbeat of Mother Earth Drum can once again be heard calling in the eagles and waking up the bears.

After a hiatus due to restrictions on in-person gatherings, drumming has resumed at Chuq'eya

Spring 2022

Qenq'a, Birch Tree House, the Tribe's Behavioral Health building.

"It's really nice to have drumming back," said Jamie Farrell, a Chemical Dependency Counselor and Drum Leader for the Heartbeat of Mother Earth Drum group. "Especially since the sun started coming out. Drumming outside feels like a whole different connection."

The Mother Earth Drum has its roots in the Tribe's Chemical Dependency program. The sobriety movement of the 1990s inspired the building of the drum by Ron Petterson, one of the Tribe's first Chemical Dependency Counselors, in about 1994. Petterson passed away in April, and the drum was played at his memorial service.

The drum is an intertribal drum where all are welcome, and the songs draw from many different cultures and traditions. It started as a traveling drum, visiting potlatches and other events around Alaska.

The Mother Earth Drum group also plays each year at the ceremonial opening of the Tribe's educational fishery.

The drum is made from a single, hollowed out piece of cottonwood. When it was made, an eagle feather was placed inside. The drum stand is adorned with a scarf, feathers, beads, a dream-catcher and other items that have been gifted to the drum by people who have been a part of the drum circle.

The drum is a healing drum, and is a sober activity for those on treatment plans. To sit at the drum, participants must be sober

that day, emphasizing the importance of respect and being part of the circle.

"It's a really spiritual thing, a healing thing," said Vickie Herrmann, a longtime member of the drum group.

Herrmann and Martina Georges, the Tribe's Ts'itq'u Circle Coordinator, are sharing their experience with Farrell and new Drum Keeper Ken Hoyt, Yinihugheltani Project Coordinator.

"The thing about the drum is that it's very powerful," Georges said, adding that some people are intimidated to approach the drum, while others are drawn to it.

The drum circle starts with a prayer or blessing. Those in the drum circle sprinkle a small amount of tobacco on the head of the drum, going around the circle to the left to follow the movement of the sun in the sky.

As the Drum Leader, Farrell begins each song with a steady beat, and others in the circle follow. She uses hand signs to indicate when to speed up, or when she is offering a solo to someone in the circle. Others in the circle can signal to take a solo, or to ask for one.

Farrell also signals when she wants everyone in the circle to play toward the edge of the drum, so she can play the louder "honor beats" in the middle of the drum head. She will also signal different parts of the song, and when the song is coming to the end.

"It's medicine for me. It's good for the soul," said Tom Titus during a recent drum circle.

The drum circle is inclusive, and open to all. Those just learning are supported by those who are



*Jamie Farrell and Ken Hoyt drum and sing together with others at the Heartbeat of Mother Earth Drum.*

more experienced. Herrmann said that sitting in the drum circle is like life – it's OK if you make a mistake.

"We all make mistakes in life. That's how we learn," Herrmann said.

Many of the songs follow a call-and-repeat format, making them easy to learn.

"It's for everybody. There's plenty of songs that are vocables, so you don't need to know the language to know the song," said Hoyt.

Some of the group's favorite songs include "Eagle Chaser,"

which Farrell says always calls in eagles, and "Bear Song," which the group says should only be played when the bears have come out of their winter slumbers.

In between songs, those in the drum circle talk and share. Sometimes it's lighthearted banter or discussion of a song, other times it's a more somber topic.

"It makes connections. It creates community," Georges said of sitting in a drum circle.

The drum circle ends with a prayer, giving those sitting in the circle an opportunity to reflect.

Dorien Coray grew up in the area, and said she always comes to a drum circle when she returns for a visit. As a youth, she said she couldn't wait to turn 12, so she would be old enough to join the youth drum group.

"You feel lighter," Coray said after a recent drum circle, adding the drumming helps her with health issues as well. "It's such a healing thing to come back to."

The Heartbeat of Mother Earth Drum Group meets on Wednesdays and Fridays at 3 p.m. To learn more, call 907-335-7300.

# Summer Learning Programs



*A Kenai River float trip was the highlight of a previous summer camp.*

Summer is just around the corner, and the Tribe's Education department is preparing for another season of learning opportunities.

The Tribe's summer education programs are open to Kenaitze Tribal Members and current Education program participants.

## Yaghanen Summer Culture Camp

Yaghanen Summer Culture Camp is for students who have just completed kindergarten through eighth grade, ages 5 to 14. There are two sessions; Session 1 runs from June 13 to July 1, and Session 2 will be from July 11 to July 22.

Yaghanen Summer Culture Camp will focus on being outdoors. Culture and language learning will be done in collaboration with the Tribe's Dena'ina Language Institute. Other opportunities will include fishing, salmon and the salmon life cycle; swimming lessons; learning about plants and animals; and more.

## Susten Camp

Susten Camp is the Tribe's archaeology program for high school students ages 14 to 18. The camp will be held June 6 to June 10, and will include learning about the archaeological process, field work, and a Kenai National Wildlife Refuge orientation. Participants are eligible for high school credit.

## Henu gheldih (Employability Camp)

Henu gheldih will help high school students, ages 14 to 18, with employability skills, such as resume writing. Participants will also talk about college and career planning. Henu gheldih will run from May 31 to June 3.

## Youth Elder Leadership Program

The Youth Elder Leadership Program for students ages 14-16 will focus on community service, including life skills, volunteer hours, career skills, lead-

ership skills and team building. Participants will partner with Elders in the community. Session 1 will run from June 13 to July 1. Session 2 is from July 11 to July 22.

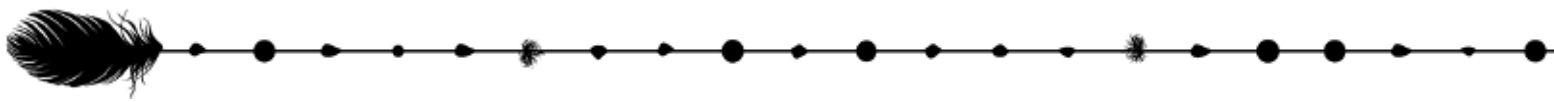
## Career Pop-Ups

Each Career Pop-Up will take a dive into a different career cluster. Students ages 14 to 18 will have the opportunity to learn from professionals in a variety of fields. Pop-ups are tentatively scheduled for June 17 and July 15.

To register for summer programs, go to <https://bit.ly/Yaghanen2022> and fill out the form. You will then receive necessary medical and release forms.

Questions about summer programs may be directed to Sara Battiest, Yaghanen K-12 Administrator, at 907-335-7607, or by emailing [education@kenaitze.org](mailto:education@kenaitze.org).

More information about the Tribe's Native Youth Olympics team will be coming in the near future.



# ISPs keep focus on learning

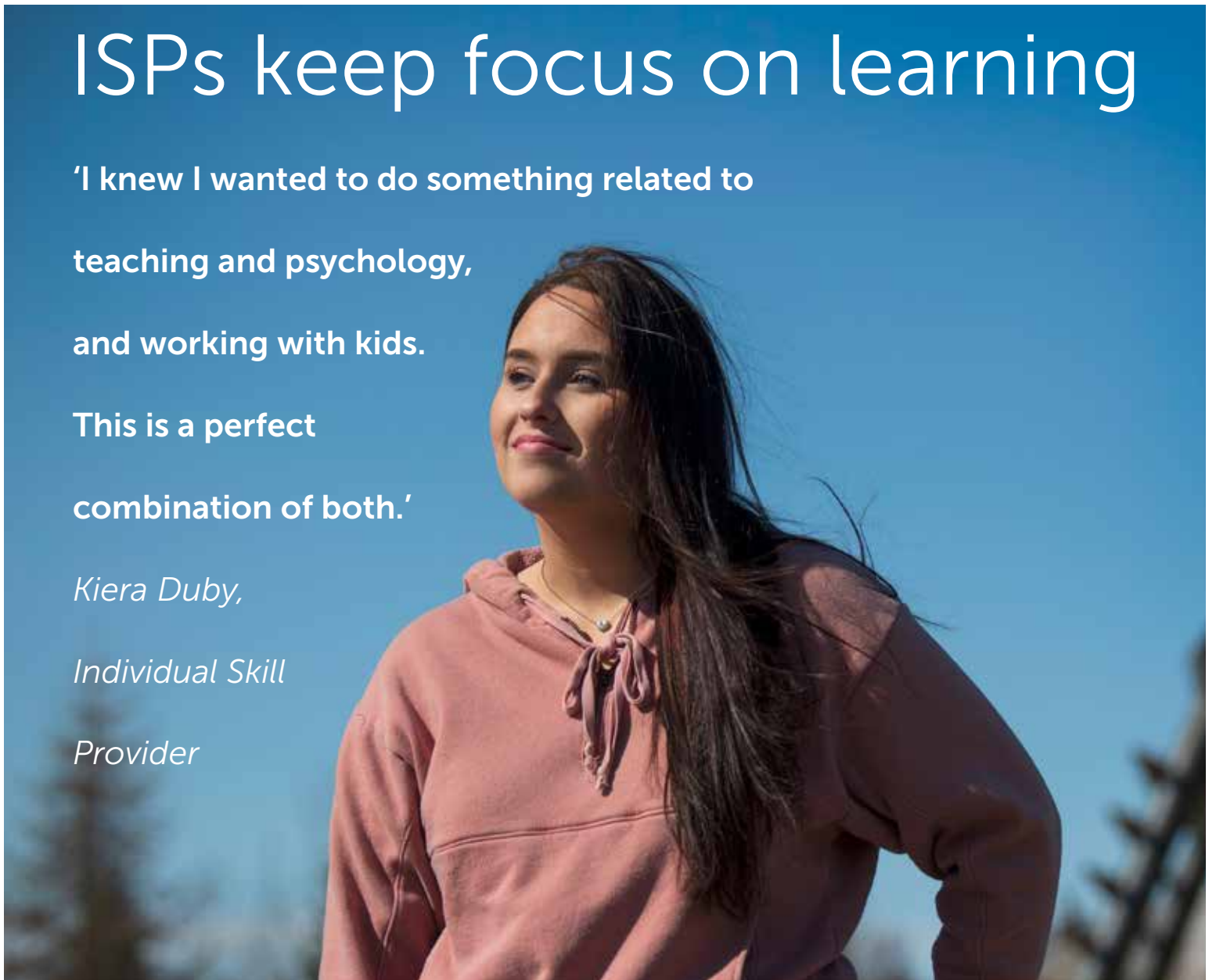
'I knew I wanted to do something related to teaching and psychology, and working with kids.

This is a perfect combination of both.'

*Kiera Duby,*

*Individual Skill*

*Provider*



*Kiera Duby is one of the Tribe's Individual Skill Providers. She enjoys making a difference in the lives of children.*

After the challenges of the past two years, the work of the Tribe's Individual Skill Providers is as important as ever.

"COVID forced parents to try to be teachers, and that caused a lot of stress at home for parents and for kids," said Kiera Duby, an ISP who works with students at Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School. "So everyone is trying to catch up. And there weren't a lot of ways to be social, so a lot of the crucial times in kids' lives, when

they learn to be social, were taken from them."


In fact, Behavioral Health's Youth Services provided services for between 50 and 60 un'ina, those who come to us, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, the program is currently serving 87 students in 11 central Kenai Peninsula schools.

"Mental health needs for kids have increased. As kids were more isolated, behaviors skyrocketed," said Joe Cannava, Youth Services

Supervisor. "We're seeing kids struggling to get caught up."

Individual Skill Providers, or ISPs, work with students ages 5 to 18. ISPs are available to students who meet certain criteria. Referrals might come from the school or a health care professional. Their job is to help students be successful.

However, ISPs aren't tutors. Instead, they focus on a student's mood and behavior, so that the student, in turn, can be focused on learning.



"We work with a child's behavioral health. We help kids get to school, and stay in school, and manage themselves in school," Cannava said.

Duby started she job as an ISP about three years ago, just after high school.

"I knew I wanted to do something related to teaching and psychology, and working with kids. This is a perfect combination of both," Duby said.

The Tribe provides training for the job, and new ISPs spend several days shadowing an experienced ISP to watch how they work with students. After that, ISPs gradually integrate into the classroom flow.

Because of the need, Duby said she works with five students each day. She said it is especially rewarding to see students begin to open up and share their feelings in a more healthy way.

"Some of these kids are regularly sent to the office for disruptive behavior. They feel big feelings, but they don't know what to do with them. It's cool to see kids take the skills you teach them and apply them on their own," Duby said.

Duby said working as an ISP has changed her perspective. She remembers in high school, realizing that some of her classmates might be worried about their home situation, their next meal, or where they were going to spend the night.

Duby said her role as an ISP makes her feel like she's making a difference in the lives of others.

"When you're able to help support them where you can, it

brings a whole new level to that," Duby said. "It forces you to realize that everyone is going through something."

Youth Services is gearing up for its summer program. The program gives an opportunity for Youth Services staff to continue to work with students when school is not in session.

Cannava said that during the summer program, participants can continue to work on social skills.

Rhianna Autry said her son, River, who is completing fifth grade at Mountain View Elementary School, is excited to participate in the summer program.

"We do fun activities every day," said River, adding that he "probably maybe" might also make some new friends.

River said that his ISP helps him when he gets stressed out or frustrated during the school day. He can take a break and go look

at the fish in the school's fish tank, or take a walk.

"We have salmon and some colorful fish in a tank," River said. "Walking, that's another thing we do. Sometimes we walk around the whole building. And you know the art they have hanging? We look at that."

Duby said ISPs help students develop skills to help deal with stress. One of the biggest steps, she said, is when students are able to overcome the negative thoughts or limits they place on themselves.

She views it as an honor to be a crucial part of a child's education.

"It's a really cool opportunity to be able to invest in these kids and help them see their strengths and what they're capable of," Duby said.

To learn more about becoming an ISP, visit [www.kenaitze.org/careers/](http://www.kenaitze.org/careers/). For more information about the Tribe's Youth Services programs, call 907-335-7500.

**'When you're able to help support them**

**where you can, it brings a whole new level to**

**that. It forces you to realize that everyone is**

**going through something.'**

*Kiera Duby, Individual Skill Provider*

# Bequsilna, 'those who are gone'

## Betty Irene Porter



Betty Irene (Leman) Porter, 91, was born on May 1, 1930, and passed away on March 17, 2022, surrounded by her loving daughter Cindy and devoted son Tom.

A funeral service was held on March 24 at Peninsula Memorial Chapel. She was rest on March 28, 2022, at the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord Orthodox Church Cemetery, Ninilchik.

Betty was a fifth-generation Alaskan and the youngest of eight siblings born to Irene and Joseph Leman in Ninilchik.

Growing up in Ninilchik could be a hard life in those days, but Betty possessed a strong work ethic and was very independent, even feisty at times. Because there was no high school in Ninilchik at that time, Betty graduated from Seward High School.

Betty was preceded in death by her husband, Clifford Porter; sons, Brian Tibbs and Don Tibbs; brothers, Nick Leman, Joe Leman, and Harry Leman; and sisters, Juanita Bertson, Ann Leman, and Rose MacSwain.

She is survived by her daughter, Cindy Tulloch (Rob); son, Tom Tibbs; grandchildren, Brent, Jennifer, and Kevin Tulloch, Yuri Tibbs, and Shane Blakely; three great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Read her full obituary at <https://legcy.co/3qv3Cx6>.

## Ronald Petterson

Lifelong Kenai resident Ronald Petterson, 70, passed away on April 8, 2022 at home from natural causes.

Memorial services were held on April 15, 2022 at Peninsula Memorial Chapel in Kenai.

Ron was born May 2, 1951 in Seward. He grew up and received his education in Kenai. He served in the U.S. Marine Corp from October 1968 until his honorable discharge in October 1971. He worked for the Kenaitze

Indian Tribe as a counselor until his retirement.

Ron enjoyed football, baseball, bowling, fishing and playing video games.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Frances LeMaster and his father, Urban Petterson.

Ron is survived by his daughter, Casie Ortega of Orange, Calif.; sons, Jonathon Knight of Anchorage and Zebadiah Petterson of Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico; brothers and sisters, Jim Petterson and his wife, Betsy of Kenai, Helen Herston of Indiana, Peggy Segura of Kenai, Eric Titus of Anchorage, Donna Garner of Arkansas, JR Pederson of Phoenix, Arizona, and Trish England of Anchorage; and numerous nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles.

Read his full obituary at <https://bit.ly/RPetterson>.

## Share your news

***Do you have any news you'd like to share?  
Graduations, marriages, or births? Any  
other personal milestones?***

Email [news@kenaitze.org](mailto:news@kenaitze.org) to be considered for inclusion in a future edition of the Counting Cord.

### ***Have you lost a loved one?***

For information about services and support provided by the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, please contact Jessica Crump, Tribal Member Services Supervisor, by phone at 907-335-7204 or by email at [jcrump@kenaitze.org](mailto:jcrump@kenaitze.org).



# From Tribal Members



*Sasha Jackson and Jessica Crump have earned associate's degrees in Business Administration from Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage.*

## Jackson earns degree from Alaska Pacific

Sasha Jackson has been awarded her associate's degree in Business Administration from Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage.

## Crump earns degree, selected for Indigenous Leadership Summit

Jessica Crump earned her associate's degree in Business Administration from Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage.

Jessica was also selected to participate in the American Indian Graduate Center 2022 Indigenous Leadership Summit, a two-week virtual summit to foster leadership development,

promote community impact and offer support, strategies, and best practices in implementing Indigenous leadership on participants' respective campus communities.

## Kallander in spotlight at Grand Canyon University



Tribal Member Dannaka Kallander recently was spotlighted in a "Feature Friday" post by the Honors College at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona. Kallander, who is finishing up her freshman year, is studying biology with an emphasis in physical therapy. She is a Kenaitze scholarship recipient.

While she was born and raised in Arizona, Dannaka said her father, Vincent Kallander, has shared stories of growing up in Alaska and spending summers with his brother at Point Pos-

session. One story was passed down by her great-grandmother, Feodoria Kallander-Pennington, about Captain Cook visiting Point Possession. Dannaka said she is interested in learning more about her heritage and culture, and hopes to visit Alaska.

## Hendryx wins art contest



Kate Ann Hendryx, a seventh-grader at Ninilchik School, was awarded first place in the Safe Harbor Art Contest, sponsored by Alaska Sea Grant. Kate is the daughter of Keene Hendryx and granddaughter of Elsie Maillelle.



# **Cooking with Kenaitze**



**Whitefish with Rhubarb Salsa  
Rosemary Roasted Potatoes  
and Spring Vegetables**

# Whitefish with Rhubarb Salsa

*Yields: 4 | Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes |  
Ready in: 30 minutes*

## Rhubarb Salsa Ingredients:

1½ cups rhubarb, diced and blanched  
½ cup onion, minced  
2 teaspoons lime juice  
¼ cup chopped chives  
1 jalapeño, seeded and minced  
2 teaspoons honey  
1 tablespoon cider vinegar  
¼ teaspoon kosher salt  
1/8 teaspoon cayenne

## Directions:

1. Place the rhubarb and onion in a medium sized bowl and drizzle in lime juice.
2. Add the jalapeño and green onion to the bowl and toss together.
3. Whisk the vinegar and honey in a separate bowl until combined, add to the salsa mixture and season with cayenne, and salt. Refrigerate.

## Whitefish Ingredients:

¼ cup yellow cornmeal (or whole wheat flour)  
1 pound whitefish, skin removed, cut into 4 even fillets  
3 tablespoons canola oil  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1 teaspoon onion powder  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons of Herbes de Provence (thyme, rosemary, savory, marjoram, oregano, tarragon)

## Directions:

1. Place cornmeal in shallow bowl and season with garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, salt, and herb de Provence. Dredge the whitefish fillets into the cornmeal.
2. Add 3 tablespoons of oil to a large skillet and sauté the fish over medium heat, turning, until golden and crispy, a couple minutes on each side. Place the fried whitefish on a bed of beet greens

(or other green leafy vegetables) with a side of rosemary roasted potatoes and spring vegetables.

Note: If you are using thick fillets, it is always a good idea to check and make sure the internal temperature of the fish is at least 145 degrees before eating to prevent any foodborne illnesses.

# Rosemary Roasted Potatoes and Spring Vegetables

*Yields: 4 | Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 30 minutes |  
Ready in: 45 minutes*

## Ingredients:

3 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon rosemary leaves, fresh, minced (1 tsp dried rosemary)  
1 tablespoon sage, fresh, minced (1 tsp dried sage)  
1 tablespoon chives, fresh, minced (1 tsp dried chives)  
1 tablespoon tarragon, fresh, minced (1 tsp dried tarragon)  
1 teaspoon salt  
½ teaspoon black pepper  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 pound yellow potatoes, washed and cut into quarters  
1 pound carrots, washed, peeled, and sliced into large sticks  
2 beets, washed, peeled, and cut into small cubes  
Note: You can substitute 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon of Herbes de Provence in place of the sage, tarragon, rosemary, and chives.

## Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees and line a baking pan with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, toss together all the ingredients making sure all the vegetables are coated in the oil. Lay an even layer on the prepared baking sheet.
3. Bake for 15 minutes, stir the vegetables and then bake for an additional 15 minutes. Serve alongside the Whitefish with Rhubarb Salsa.

*Registered Dietician Stephen Kronlage assists un'ina at the Dena'ina Wellness Center with medical nutrition therapy, which includes managing weight loss, diabetes, IBS, weight gain, Celiac disease, and other conditions through an individualized nutrition plan.  
To make an appointment, call 907-335-7500.*



# MyHealth

## Your Portal to Wellness

Access parts of your health record online, including:

- Clinical record summary (allergies, immunizations, health issues, discharge summary, surgeries and procedures)
- Some lab results, such as COVID-19 tests
- Limited personal information
- Secure non-urgent messaging with your care team
- Requests to schedule appointments



To create a MyHealth account, speak with an Un'ina Navigator at your next appointment.



Learn more or log in to your MyHealth account at [www.kenaitze.org/myhealth/](http://www.kenaitze.org/myhealth/).

Or, download the HealthLife app to access your MyHealth portal from your smartphone.

Questions?  
Please call 907-335-7500.

For password assistance with an existing account, call 877-621-8014.

# It's Not Too Late to Get a Flu Shot!

**The Dena'ina Wellness Center has flu vaccines for Alaska Native and American Indian people.**

- **Anyone ages 6 months and older can get a flu vaccine.**
- **Especially important for Elders, pregnant women, young children, and those with chronic health conditions.**
- **Protect yourself and your community. A flu vaccination reduces your risk of hospitalization with the flu.**



**Call 907-335-7500 to make an appointment or to learn more.  
Dena'ina Wellness Center • 508 Upland St., Kenai**



# Dena'ina naqenaga



**Yuzhun k'qiz'un • *It is clear  
blue sky weather***

Dena'ina naqenaga is "our Dena'ina language."  
Find more Dena'ina language resources online at  
[www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/](http://www.kenaitze.org/education/denaina-language-institute/),  
including an interactive audio dictionary with this and many  
more Dena'ina words and phrases.

# Addresses and Phone Numbers



**Administration Building**  
150 N. Willow St., Kenai  
907-335-7200



**Dena'ina Wellness Center**  
508 Upland St., Kenai  
907-335-7500



**Yaghanen Youth  
& Community Education**  
130 S. Willow St., Suite 5  
907-335-7606



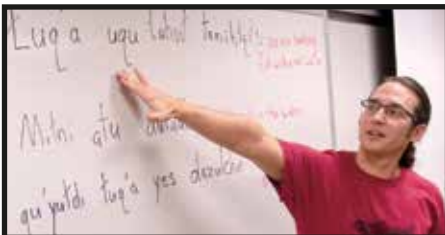
**Chuu'eya Qenq'a  
Birch Tree House – Behavioral Health**  
510 Upland St., Kenai  
907-335-7300



**Early Childhood Center**  
130 N. Willow St., Kenai  
907-335-7260



**Na'ini Family and Social Services**  
1001 Mission Ave., Kenai  
907-335-7600



**Dena'ina Language  
Institute**  
1001 Mission Ave., Kenai  
907-335-7667



**Kenaitze/Salamatof Tribally  
Designated Housing**  
1001 Mission Ave., Kenai  
907-335-7228



**Qiz'unch' Tribal Court**  
130 S. Willow St., Suite 3  
907-335-7219



**Tyotkas Elder Center**  
1000 Mission Ave., Kenai  
907-335-7280



**KENAITZE**  
**INDIAN**  
**TRIBE**

**150 N. Willow St.**

**Kenai, AK 99611**

**[www.kenaitze.org](http://www.kenaitze.org)**

**907-335-7200**



Kenaitze Indian Tribe  
P.O. Box 988  
Kenai, AK 99611



TO

ASSURE

**KAHTNUHT'ANA DENA'INA**

THRIVE FOREVER

